

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-05 IO-10 AID-05 SY-04 /079 W

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R 211032Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9003

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 1265

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS CB

SUBJECT: DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN CASUALTIES CONTINUE TO MOUNT

REF: A. PHNOM PENH 544

B. PHNOM PENH 603

1. SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE, UPDATING THE TWO REFTELS, ADDS UP THE FRIENDLY AND ENEMY CASUALTIES FOR THE JANUARY 1-19 PERIOD, REACHING A TOTAL FIGURE FOR BOTH SIDES OF 18,000 KILLED AND WOUNDED, AT A RATE OF ABOUT 1,000 A DAY, EXCLUSIVE OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES. END SUMMARY.

2. REFTELS A AND B DESCRIBED ENEMY AND FRIENDLY CASUALTIES, RESPECTIVELY, FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1-8. WHILE THE LEVEL OF COMBAT INTENSITY HAS CLEARLY DECLINED OVERALL IN THE PERIOD JANUARY 8-19, CASUALTIES HAVE CONTINUED TO MOUNT ON BOTH SIDES.

3. OUR CURRENT BEST ESTIMATE OF CUMULATIVE CASUALTIES FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1 TO JANUARY 19 WOULD BE: KHMER COMMUNISTS: 3,400 KILLED AND 9,000 WOUNDED; FANK: 2,100 KILLED AND MISSING, AND 3,600 WOUNDED. THIS BRINGS THE CASUALTIES FOR THE TWO SIDES TO A TOTAL OF 5,500 KILLED
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AND MISSING AND 12,600 WOUNDED, OR A GRAND TOTAL OF

AROUND 18,000 CASUALTIES -- JUST UNDER 1,000 PER DAY.

4. OUR MILITARY STATISTICIANS TELL US THAT THIS LEVEL OF SUSTAINED CASUALTIES HAS PROBABLY NOT BEEN EQUALLED PREVIOUSLY DURING THE CAMBODIAN CIVIL WAR. CERTAINLY IT HAS NOT BEEN REACHED IN THE PAST YEAR OR SO.

5. FANK'S COMBAT POWER HAS DEFINITELY SUFFERED FROM THESE LOSSES. OF THE FOUR COMBAT DIVISIONS IN THE PHNOM PENH AREA, ONLY THE THIRD, HOLDING THE VITAL SOUTHWEST APPROACHES TO THE CITY, IS FULLY COMBAT CAPABLE, SINCE IT HAS SUFFERED LESS THAN 50 KIA SO FAR. OF THE SOUTH CENTER AND THE SOUTHEAST, THE 1ST AND 2ND DIVISIONS WERE ALREADY SORELY DEPLETED FROM THE BASSAC OPERATION OF AUGUST - DECEMBER, 1974. THE 1ST DIVISION, THOUGH IT HAS PERHAPS BORNETHE LEAST OF THE KC ATTACK IN THE CURRENT DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE, STILL AVERAGES ONLY 160 MEN PER BATTALION (AUTHORIZED STRENGTH ON PAPER OF A FANK BATTALION: 512). THE 2ND DIVISION IS ALSO SERIOUSLY UNDER STRENGTH. IN THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF THE CITY DEFENSES, THE 7TH DIVISION BORE THE HEAVIEST PART OF THE KC DRY SEASON ATTACK, TAKING OVER 400 KILLED AND MISSING IN THE FIRST PHASE OF THE ENEMY OFFENSIVE. IT HAS RECEIVED FIRST PRIORITY ON FANK REPLACEMENTS, RECEIVING OVER 500 TO DATE.

6. OTHER FANK COMBAT UNITS, OUTSIDE OF THE 4 NUMBERED DIVISIONS, WHICH HAVE SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES HAVE INCLUDED THE 36TH BRIGADE (250 KILLED AND 400 MISSING ALONG HIGHWAY 1, NOW BEING REORGANIZED), THE FOUR BATTALIONS OF THE PARATROOP BRIGADE (ALREADY LARGELY UNDER STRENGTH BEFORE THE OFFENSIVE BUT WHICH JUST RECEIVED A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF REPLACEMENTS), AND THE NAVAL INFANTRY (MARINE) UNITS WHICH WERE SEVERELY HIT IN THEIR MANY SMALL POSITIONS ALONG THE MEKONG (OVER 200 KILLED AND MISSING IN THE FIRST PHASE).

7. IN THE JANUARY 1-15 PERIOD, FANK SENT 850 NEW RECRUITS TO TRAINING CENTERS, WITH SEVERAL HUNDRED MORE AWAITING PROCESSING BEFORE BEING SENT TO THESE CENTERS.
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TWELVE HUNDRED RECRUITS HAVE FINISHED TRAINING SO FAR IN JANUARY AND RECEIVED UNIT ASSIGNMENTS.

8. KC ABILITY TO BRING SOME OF THEIR BADLY MAULED UNITS BACK TO STRENGTH IS SOMEWHAT PROBLEMATICAL. THEY RECRUIT BY FORCE AND EMPLOY BOTH THE EXTREMELY YOUNG AND OLD, AS WELL AS ALL-FEMALE UNITS (NOT ALWAYS JUST IN LOGISTICAL SUPPORT). HOW QUICKLY THE KC CAN FIND, TRAIN

AND TRANSPORT FILLERS FOR COMBAT UNITS REMAINS TO BE SEEN. PRESUMABLY SOME OF THEIR LOSSES WILL BE MADE UP BY TRANSFERRING PARTLY TRAINED INDIVIDUALS FROM LOCAL DISTRICT OR TERRITORIAL UNITS INTO THEIR INTERVENTION BATTALIONS AND REGIMENTS.

9. TOGETHER WITH THE EQUALLY IMPORTANT QUESTION OF RE-SUPPLY OF MUNITIONS AND MATERIEL, THE MANPOWER EQUATION IS CRUCIAL. IT SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN THAT THE KC BEGAN THE OFFENSIVE AROUND PHNOM PENH WITH A FORCE OF SOME 90 TO 100 BATTALIONS, OR 25 - 30,000 TROOPS (IN ADDITION TO ANOTHER 10,000 TO 12,000 ON THE LOWER MEKONG). ACCORDINGLY, THOUGH HIS NEARLY 12,500 KILLED AND WOUNDED (REMEMBERING THAT A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF HIS WOUNDED ULTIMATELY DIE FROM LACK OF MEDICAL CARE) IS A VERY HIGH FIGURE, HE STILL HAS A POTENT FIGHTING FORCE IN THE AREA, AND THERE IS EVERY REASON TO EXPECT MUCH MORE HARD FIGHTING AHEAD, WITH CONTINUING VERY HEAVY CASUALTIES FOR BOTH SIDES OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS AND MONTHS.

10. ALTHOUGH THIS REPORT IS DIRECTED PRIMARILY TO MILITARY CASUALTIES, IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT CIVILIAN CASUALTIES HAVE ALSO BEEN VERY HEAVY. ONE LOCAL SCORE-KEEPING JOURNALIST HAS PUBLISHED A FIGURE OF 173 DEAD SO FAR FROM ROCKET ATTACKS ALONG. BUT THE NUMBERS KILLED AND WOUNDED IN KC ACTIONS AGAINST POPULATED AREAS AND REFUGEE CAMPS, AND THE 60,000 NEW REFUGEES CREATED TO DATE, GIVE ONLY PARTIAL PICTURE OF THE EXTENT OF HUMAN SUFFERING BROUGHT ABOUT IN THE SAME SHORT JANUARY 1 TO 19 TIME FRAME. WAR MAY BE FOUGHT PRIMARILY BY THE MILITARY, BUT IN THE LONG RUN IT IS THE ENTIRE POPULATION THAT PAYS. DEAN
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